

RURAL ROADSIDES

Death by a thousand cuts

or

Conserve our shared treasure?



Many of our Shire's rural roadsides are important remnants of rare plant communities and habitat for many animal species. Their biodiversity and beauty are constantly under threat of damage or destruction.

Some of the many examples of unsuitable treatment of significant roadside vegetation are

- Cutting back and removal of roadside native trees and shrubs, groundcovers and wildflowers.
- Removal of dead wood that provides habitat for diverse species
- Mowing and ripping of large stretches of biodiverse roadsides leaving only large eucalypts and preventing the growth of young trees to replace old ones.
- Planting of large non-native windbreak trees very close to the fence and even on the roadside reserve itself where they encroach on and compete with indigenous vegetation on the roadside, and require trimming by road authorities for safety purposes.
- Regular dumping of large loads of road material by drainage and grading contractors on top of significant vegetation.

Compared to other Shires there is barely a mention of roadsides in MRSC environmental strategies, apart from weed management; nor are there any guidelines available on the MRSC website for landowners regarding their adjacent roadsides. Significant Macedon Ranges roadside vegetation is not fully mapped; the draft Roadsides Management plan of 1994 was never progressed.

What can residents do on our own roadsides to assist conservation?

Come as guests of Newham and District Landcare Group (NDLG) on **Friday 24th July** to ask questions and hear Michelle Patrick from MRSC talk about Council roles and responsibilities on roadsides, and Dr Steve Krstic talk about roadsides conservation and their importance in a Landscape Conservation Strategy. 7 for 7.30, in the Newham Mechanics Hall. The event is free and supper provided. RSVP Helen Scott 0412582526.

Support us in our campaign for a robust and effective Roadside Management Strategy which balances the priorities of biodiversity protection, road safety, and fire management. It will involve data collection, mapping, and provision of environmental advice, information and advocacy.

We'll be going on biodiversity treasure hunts, with funds and energy committed by NDLG. We'll survey and map key demonstration sites, where stretches of healthy diversity exist alongside weeds and damage, find what's there, photograph it, free the precious survivors from weeds and showcase what can be done to protect and enhance these neglected common lands.

This is a start to what we hope will be a much larger movement re-imagining Rural Roadsides as part of a landscape web of indigenous flora and fauna.

